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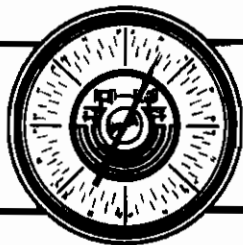
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THE BAROMETER

(A letter addressed to Col. W.F. Long, USA, in response to his article in the February issue titled, "A Perspective of Counterinsurgency in Three Dimensions—Tradition, Legitimacy, Visibility.")

The February issue of the *Naval War College Review* arrived a couple of weeks ago and your contribution on counterinsurgency immediately caught my eye for several reasons. First, I was delighted to see that you, as an Army officer, raised challenges to the operational assumptions under which we have labored for so long in Vietnam and elsewhere. Second, I was interested in your call for a study of counterinsurgency on a higher (academic) plane, to include the use of knowledge and techniques from the social sciences. A similar position was expressed by Dr. Frank Trager of NYU National Strategy Information Center during his visit here to talk to our senior ROTC cadets. Third, I noted another voice urging more and better intellectual activity among the military leadership of this country and in the service schools. . . .

Since the issue arrived, I've wrestled with the problem on how to comment to your article. Initial objections to statements supporting your challenges to assumptions have been demolished after a more thorough reading. Yet, I still have some comments.

I think that the problem of legitimacy is the fundamental problem we face in our counterinsurgency efforts. The solutions to the problems of tradition and visibility would follow rather easily in comparison, I believe, once the question of legitimacy was solved, since

the moral issue of "who is right?" is bound up most closely with that particular problem. I think the most effective device to secure legitimacy is a spontaneous invitation by a government whose character or whose crisis situation engenders empathy or sympathy in the American people. Perhaps the next most effective device is a clearly defined treaty or alliance which provides specifically for direct U.S. military entry to support a government which again meets the approval of the American people, or perhaps more accurately, the liberal news media.

On a more polemical note:

With respect to your first challenge, I am not sure I agree that "any concept . . . aimed at improving political access, social mobility, and economic betterment would be destabilizing." I think the operational environment and the level of administration from which implementation is viewed must be considered. I tend to agree that your "true equation" is applicable to the Vietnamese society, which has a sophisticated cultural tradition and which had undergone some material gain (Westernization) under the French. But, I would suggest that the Montagnard society, which I considered near zero on a "development scale" (at least in 1963-4), would fit into the "hoped for" equation, at least for a time. Perhaps a failure to recognize the two different societies early in 1961, and to make plans and allowances accordingly, was a cause for some of our problems.

With respect to your second challenge and ignoring the question of

legitimacy, I object to your statement that "... the military man is simply not professionally fitted to make substantive contributions to political, economic, or sociological problems..." Is not one of the cornerstones of the military profession, the study and application of leadership? I will concede that the stereotyped concept of military leadership ("Follow Me," et al) is inappropriate in most situations in the areas stated. But, I would argue that the other techniques of leadership used in myriad military, noncombat situations adequately fit the professional soldier to solve recognized or demonstrated problems in those areas.

I want to comment on the phrase "substantive contribution." Certainly from a theoretical or philosophical perspective (from which I recognize you are proceeding), or from a high administrative level, a soldier's contribution in the P-E-S area will be slight, if not nil. But on the lower operational level I firmly believe that his efforts can be substantive, even if they affect only one family or other social unit, and I believe the cumulative effect of individual contributions would be significant on the higher level. Further, though you qualify your statement in terms of "a political mandate or a relevant psychological inclination," I would argue that assuming legitimacy, and given culturally sensitizing training, and a mission type order, any professional soldier would be as successful as any civilian—perhaps more so—in view of inherent qualities of discipline, self-discipline, attention to duty, and his capability of applying military force in the insurgency environment when needed. I note from your biographical sketch that you were an advisor in Vietnam. I suspect that you may have had problems with culturally insensitive officers and NCO's. I saw the same problems in two tours and concede this is a great problem but not to the extent that the military should be eliminated from this role.

To your third assumption, my only comment is that after 8 years of political orientation and its resultant counter-insurgency activity in the Kennedy-Johnson style, it is time to try other approaches. We seem to be moving in that direction if the President's recent "State of the World" message is the indicator it is touted to be. Dialectically, perhaps 1976 will see the synthesis of a solution to insurgency. As regards the fourth assumption, I see in your presentation a trace of the traditional, post-WW II bogey (International Monolithic Communism) still remaining. Realizing that the reality of a shattered monolith has yet to be completely recognized by the Armed Forces (if many recent official writings are valid examples) would it not be better for "Military Academe" to be specific as it shows the way by speaking and writing in terms of the Soviet Union and Red China, rather than "Communists"?

Your closing paragraph is the one which stirred me to write to you. As you do, Dr. Trager (and many others, of course) stressed the point about the need for professional soldiers to become "intellectualized." Unfortunately, the number of professional soldiers who have the tendencies and prerequisites to pursue advanced study in the political science/international relations/historical spectrum are few now and may become fewer still. The liberal-oriented political science profession is at a crossroads, and is becoming, if it is not already, a very radical profession. I suspect the impact of this radicalization is reflected in the low number of political science/IR students in our ROTC program, in comparison with engineers, agriculture and business majors. I suspect, too, that the radicalization is beyond recall... and perhaps the answer to this personnel problem will be the new Military Assistance Officer Program.

Another point about your last paragraph intrigued me. I am not at all sure what you visualize when you speak of

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forcing the political leadership to think carefully about the character of a war. I assume that you mean to say that the Armed Forces leadership (JCS) would argue their case dispassionately at first, then passionately to the point of insubordination, disrespect, and resignation, in such a way as to gain congressional and public support for the military view. I doubt that such would happen for several reasons: (a) inculcated Constitutional restraints and institutionally induced restraints on the individual military personnel; (b) institutionally induced attitudes toward a mission or other task which can be summarized as the "Can Do" attitude, or the "must-do-something, even-if-it's-wrong" syndrome; (c) past examples of military dissidents, such as Mitchell, Gavin, or Taylor whose courts-martial or resignations had little, if any, immediate operational impact which is what would be desired; (d) A public and congressional confusion, even loss of confidence, at the appearance of "the Generals" saying they did not want to go to war. The latter reason could even create the opposite effect by marshalling support for the decision to go to war since the American antimilitary bias of which you speak would be expressed in showing those "know-it-all professional soldiers" that anyone can fight and win a war.

This letter has become too long. Despite my polemics and disagreements, my sincere congratulations for an excellent and timely contribution to the field of strategic thought. . . .

Sincerely,

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Major, FA
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(Colonel Long's open letter response to Major Raymond. Editor)

Major Raymond's letter presents an opportunity to expand some of the ideas contained in the original article, and what follows is linked to his comments.

I agree that legitimacy is fundamental and that the moral issue is at the core of the concept. The consensus of "what is right" is extremely important. The popular conviction that the action to support the "right" was accomplished in the "right way" is equally necessary. As in the basic article, I firmly believe that American military intervention of any considerable duration should be the result of constitutionally determined action, which is also a means of insuring public moral support. One of the larger lessons of the Vietnamese war is that failure to debate the wisdom and propriety of national commitment to war in Congress prior to the fact does not eliminate the debate; it merely postpones the time and changes the nature of the debate.

Regarding your discussion of the difference between the Vietnamese and Montagnard societies with respect to the destabilizing aspects discussed in the first assumption, I think both societies fit into this category. The more enlightened and self-sufficient the Montagnards become, the more difficult it will be for any outside force to control them, and this is the point I was attempting to make. Further, although U.S. leadership had some spectacular successes with Montagnards, the results were not constructive in a political sense. Certain Montagnard groups identified with American leaders; however, this identification did not extend to a Vietnamese counterpart, Vietnamese society, the Republic of South Vietnam as a political entity, and most certainly not the United States as a political ideal.

My intention was not to minimize the substantial contributions of Ameri-

cans in Vietnam using traditional (and I think sound) leadership techniques. It is not the capability or lack of it; it is not even the degree of cross-cultural enlightenment that creates the situation. The predicament of the American military leader is that by inclination, education, and law he is not "political." This fact creates the first barrier to his effectiveness. The Communist (or any other totalitarian type) insurgent is by design a general-purpose agitator-organizer-propagandist-warrior. As such he is a political-military weapon which U.S. military forces cannot counter. Equally as important is the fact that the American in uniform cannot blend into the native political administrative machinery, the successful maintenance of which is the key to defeating Communist insurgency.

There is no doubt that American military men understand the necessity for proper behavior toward the civilian populace. Further, in many cases American military advisers in Vietnam seem to be more sensitive to the needs and feelings of Vietnamese people than their Vietnamese counterparts. This, too, has its unfortunate aspects. In the cases where it represented reality, the loyalty of the people would be to the American, and this is politically counterproductive to the government the United States is attempting to bolster. In many cases, where this was simply an egocentric preconception on the part of the American, the results could be doubly disastrous—self-deceptive and self-defeating.

In any counterinsurgency effort, it seems to me that the only hope for success is to maintain or restore a viable administrative apparatus at the lowest level, and it is at this level that any foreigner is least effective. Therefore, political policy and economic and social reforms—the essential elements in a peoples' war—are beyond the capability and outside the purview of U.S. military leadership.

The trace of the specter of international monolithic communism you detected was unintentional and results from language rather than substance. Your point that discrimination is required is correct, and the fourth assumption challenge was made only to indicate that the constructive potentialities of counterinsurgency should militate against any form of totalitarianism. In the wider sense, any movement which depends upon the conception that the power of the people must be wielded by a few self-selected persons may find the job made much more difficult as the educational level and economic position of the people improve. Whether communism is a monolithic movement or not is irrelevant. Any revolution with substantial causes that is captured and guided by a few people "in the know" represents, in the end, simply a change of bosses.

Your observations regarding the radicalization of the political science profession are disturbing. However, for all the reasons in the basic article and those included in these paragraphs, my persuasion is that the Military Assistance Officer Program will only achieve better performance of a demanding military role; it will not—cannot—change the role.

My last paragraph was not intended to advocate a chain of pressures to be exerted by military men against political leaders. The idea is to make certain that the political leadership understands that the character of the war must be an integral part of the decision to intervene militarily. This means that before any military action is undertaken, the impact of the kind of war which would ensue is assessed and inserted into the decisionmaking process. As a part of the education for both the political and military side of the house, I would recommend that all estimates of the situation include a discussion of the inherent and peculiar nature of operations, as well as the usual assessments of

enemy capabilities and own courses of action. Further, there ought to be a political estimate of the situation at home and of the allies and opposition and in the assisted country. This estimate should be as thorough and precise as that expected of the military commander at the tactical level. What I am arguing for is not a high-level form of insurgency by our top-ranking generals,

but an intellectual achievement supported by our extensive and excellent military education system.

I thank you for the opportunity to cope with interpretations which you raised with such candor.

W. F. LONG
Colonel, USA
U.S. Army Adviser, Naval War College



The capacity to understand the workings of the other man's mind is an essential element in generalship.

John Connell: Wavell, Soldier and Scholar, v. 1964